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background notes

United Kingdom

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

October 1990

Official Name: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 244,111 sq. km. (94,251 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Oregon. **Cities**: *Capital*—London (metropolitan pop. about 6.7 million. *Other cities*—Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Bradford, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol, Belfast. **Terrain**: 30% arable, 50% meadow and pasture, 12% waste or urban, 7% forested, 1% inland water. **Climate**: Generally mild and temperate; weather is subject to frequent changes but to few extremes of temperature.

People

Nationality: *Noun*—Briton(s). *Adjective*—British. **Population** (1989): 58 million. **Annual growth rate**: 1%. **Ethnic groups**: British, West Indian, South Asian. **Religions**: Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian. **Languages**: English, Welsh, Gaelic. **Education**: *Years compulsory*—12. *Attendance*—nearly 100%. *Literacy*—99%. **Health**: *Infant mortality rate*—13.3/1,000. *Life expectancy*—males 70 yrs., females 76 yrs. **Work force** (about 28 million in 1988): *Agriculture*—1.7%. *Manufacturing and engineering*—26.4%. *Construction*—4.8%. *Mining and energy*—3.1%. *Services*—64%.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Constitution: Unwritten; partly statutes, partly common law and practice.

Branches: *Executive*—monarch (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. *Legislative*—bicameral Parliament: House of Commons, House of Lords. *Judicial*—magistrates' courts, county courts, high courts, appellate courts, House of Lords.

Subdivisions: Municipalities, counties, parliamentary constituencies, province of Northern Ireland, and Scottish regions.

Political parties: Conservative; Labor; Social and Liberal Democrats (SLD); Social Democrats (SDP); and various smaller parties including the Greens and parties of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Suffrage: British subjects and citizens of the Irish Republic resident in the UK, 18 yrs. or older.

Government budget (1989): *Expenditures*— $283 billion. *Revenue*—$293 billion.

Flag: The red, white, and blue Union Jack combines crosses of the patron saints of England (St. George), Scotland (St. Andrew), and Ireland (St. Patrick).

Economy

GDP (1989): $843 billion. **Annual growth rate** (1989): 23%. **Per capita GDP** (1989): $14,535. **Avg. inflation rate** (1989): 9.2%.

Natural resources: Coal, oil, gas (North Sea).

Agriculture (1.5% of GDP 1988): *Products*—cereals, livestock, livestock products, fish.

Industry (34.4% of GDP): *Types*—steel, heavy engineering and metal manufacturing, textiles, motor vehicles and aircraft, construction, electronics, chemicals.

Trade (1989): *Exports* (f.o.b.)—$153 billion: machinery and transport equipment, petroleum, manufactures, chemicals. *Major markets*—EC, US, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Switzerland, South Africa. *Imports* (c.i.f.)—$198 billion: machinery and transport equipment, manufactures, foodstuffs, petroleum, chemicals. *Major suppliers*—EC, US, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland.

Exchange rate (1989 average): 1 UK £=US $1.64

Fiscal year: April 1-March 31.

Membership in International Organizations

UN and some of its specialized and related agencies, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Community (EC), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), INTELSAT.

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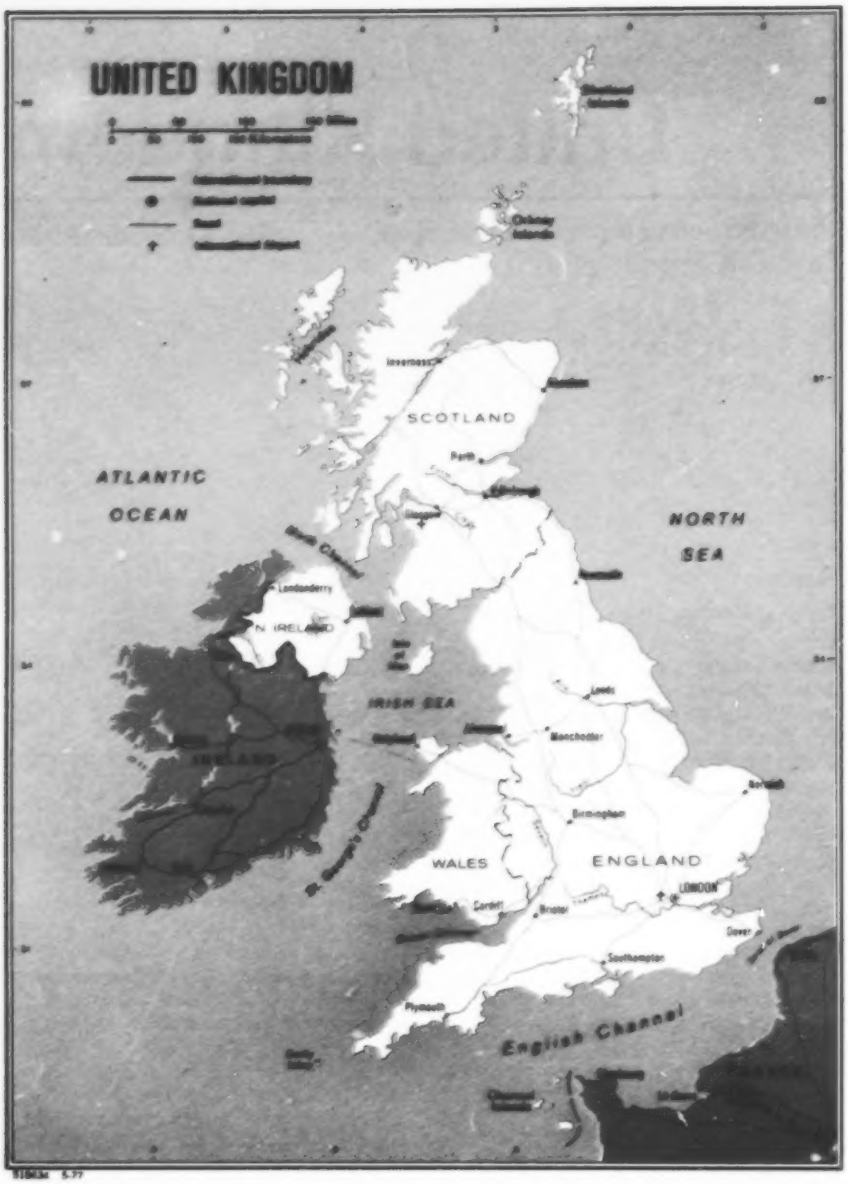

PEOPLE

In 1989, the United Kingdom's population was estimated at 58 million—the fourth largest in Europe after the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy—and its population density is one of the highest in the world. Almost one-third of the population lives in England's prosperous and fertile southeast and is predominantly urban and suburban.

The UK's high literacy rate (99%) is attributable to the introduction of public primary education in 1870 and secondary education in 1900. Education is mandatory from ages 5 through 16.

The Church of England (Episcopal) is the largest church, but virtually all religions and sects found in the world are represented in the UK.

A group of islands close to continental Europe, the United Kingdom has been subject to many invasions and migrations, especially from Scandinavia and the continent, including Roman occupation for several centuries. The contemporary Briton is descended mainly from the varied ethnic stocks that settled there before the end of the 11th century.

Under the Normans—Scandinavian Vikings who had settled in northern France—the pre-Celtic, Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norse influences were blended into the present Briton. Although the Celtic languages persist to a small degree in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, the predominant language has long been English, a blend of Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French.

HISTORY

The Roman invasion of Britain in BC 55 and its subsequent incorporation into the Roman Empire stimulated development and brought more active contacts with the rest of Europe. As Rome's strength declined, the country was exposed to invasion, including the pivotal invasions of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, until the Norman conquest in 1066. Norman rule effectively ensured Britain's safety from further invasion and stimulated the development of characteristic British institutions. Among these institutions are a political, administrative, cultural, and economic center in London; the development of a separate but established church; a system of common law; distinctive and distinguished university education; and representative government.

Union

Both Wales and Scotland were independent kingdoms which fiercely resisted English rule. The English conquest of Wales succeeded in 1282 under Edward I, and the Statute of Rhuddlan established English rule 2 years later. To appease the Welsh, Edward's son (later Edward II), who had been born in Wales, was made Prince of Wales in 1301. The tradition of bestowing this title on the eldest son of the British monarch continues today. An act of 1536 completed the political and administrative union of England and Wales.

England and Scotland were united under one crown in 1603, when James VI of Scotland succeeded his cousin Elizabeth I as James I of England. In the ensuing 100 years, strong religious and political differences divided the kingdoms. Finally, in 1707, England and

Scotland agreed to permanent union as Great Britain with the Union Jack as the national flag.

The Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1170 began centuries of strife. Successive English kings sought to impose their will on the Irish, whose cause was finally defeated in the early 17th century, when large-scale settlement of the north from Scotland and England also began. After this defeat, Ireland was subjected, with varying degrees of success, to control and regulation by Britain. The legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland was completed on January 1, 1801, under the name of the United Kingdom. However, armed struggle for political independence continued sporadically into the 20th century. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 established the Irish Free State, which left the Commonwealth and became a republic after World War II. Six northern, predominantly Protestant Irish counties have remained part of the United Kingdom.

British Expansion and Empire

Begun initially to support William the Conqueror's (c. 1029–1087) holdings in France, Britain's policy of active involvement in European affairs endured for several hundred years. By the end of the 14th century, foreign trade, originally based on wool exports to Europe, had emerged as a cornerstone of national policy. The foundations of sea power were gradually laid to protect British trade and open up new routes. Defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 firmly established Britain as a major sea power. Thereafter, its interests outside Europe grew steadily.

Attracted by the spice trade, British mercantile interests spread first to the Far East. In search of an alternate route to the Spice Islands, John Cabot reached the North American continent in 1498. Sir Walter Raleigh organized the first, short-lived British colony in Virginia in 1584, and permanent British settlement began in 1607 at Jamestown, Virginia.

During the next two centuries, Britain extended its influence abroad and consolidated its political development at home. The territorial foundation of the 20th-century British Empire, minus parts of Africa and India, had already been laid by the time of the Boston Tea Party in 1773.

Great Britain's industrial revolution greatly strengthened its ability to oppose Napoleonic France. By the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the United Kingdom was the foremost European power and its navy ruled the seas. Peace in Europe allowed the British to focus their interests on more remote parts of the world and during this period, the British Empire reached its zenith. British colonies, effectively managed, contributed to the United Kingdom's extraordinary economic growth and strengthened its voice in world affairs. Even as the United Kingdom became more imperial abroad, it continued to develop and broaden its democratic institutions at home.

20th Century

By the time of Queen Victoria's death in 1901 other nations, including the United States and Germany, had developed their own industries; the United Kingdom's comparative economic advantage had lessened, and the ambitions of its rivals had grown. The losses and destruction of World War I, the depression of the 1930s, and decades of relatively slow growth made it difficult for the United Kingdom to maintain its preeminent international position of the previous century.

Britain's control over its empire loosened during the interwar period. Ireland, with the exception of six northern counties, broke away from the United Kingdom in 1921. Nationalism became stronger in other parts of the empire, particularly in India and Egypt. In 1926, the United Kingdom, completing a process begun a century earlier, granted Australia, Canada, and New Zealand complete autonomy within the empire.

As such, they became charter members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, an informal but closely knit association that succeeded the empire. After 1947, the remainder of the kingdom was dismantled. Most of its former colonies now belong to the Commonwealth.[1]

Today, almost all of Britain's former colonies have become independent members of the Commonwealth. Although weakened by economic and political nationalism, the Commonwealth offers the United Kingdom a voice in matters concerning many developing countries. In addition, the Commonwealth helps to preserve many institutions deriving from British experience and models, such as parliamentary democracy, in those countries.

GOVERNMENT

The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution. The equivalent body of law is based on statute, common law, and "traditional rights." Changes may come about formally through new acts of Parliament, informally through the acceptance of new practices and usage, or by judicial precedents. Although Parliament has the theoretical power to make or unmake any law, in actual practice, the weight of 700 years of tradition restrains arbitrary actions.

Executive government rests nominally with the monarch but actually is exercised by a committee of ministers (cabinet) traditionally selected from among the members of the House of Commons and, to a lesser extent, the House of Lords. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the Commons, and the government is dependent on its support.

Parliament represents the entire country and can legislate for the whole or for any constituent part or combination of parts. The maximum parliamentary term is 5 years, but the prime minister may ask the monarch to dissolve Parliament and call a general election at any time. The focus of legislative power is the 650-member House of Commons, which has sole jurisdiction over finance. The House of Lords, although shorn of most of its powers, can still review, amend, or

[1] Members include: United Kingdom, Australia, The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Western Samoa, and Zambia.

delay temporarily any bills except those relating to the budget. Only a few of the 1,200 members of the House of Lords attend its sessions regularly. The House of Lords has more time than the House of Commons to pursue one of its more important functions—debating public issues.

The judiciary is independent of the legislative and executive branches but cannot review the constitutionality of legislation.

The separate identity of each of the UK's constituent parts also is reflected in governmental structure. Welsh affairs are handled at the national level by a cabinet minister (the Secretary of State for Wales) with the advice of a broadly representative council for Wales. Scotland continues, as before the union, to employ different systems of law (Roman-French), education, local government, judiciary, and national church (the Presbyterian Church of Scotland instead of the Church of England). In addition, most domestic matters are handled by separate departments grouped under a Secretary of State for Scotland, who also is a cabinet member.

Although the British government retained ultimate responsibility, Northern Ireland had its own parliament and prime minister until it was suspended in March 1972. Then, in response to deteriorating security and political conditions in the province, direct rule from London was established through a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is represented by 17 members in the House of Commons. The six counties of Northern Ireland comprise about 900,000 Protestants and 600,000 Catholics.

On November 15, 1985, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed the Anglo-Irish agreement to diminish the divisions in Northern Ireland and to achieve peace and stability. In the agreement, both governments affirm that any change in Northern Ireland's status will come about only with the consent of a majority of its people. An intergovernmental conference was established, comprised of representatives from both governments and concerned with the problems in the north and the relations between the two parts of the island. The conference deals with political, security, legal, and cross-border cooperation issues and provides for possible future devolution of responsibility for some matters within Northern Ireland. The British and Irish governments also cooperate in promoting economic and social development in the unstable areas and are seeking international support for this effort. As of 1989, the United States has given or pledged contributions totaling $138 million to the International Fund for Ireland. The fund provides grants and loans to businesses to improve the economy, redress inequalities of employment opportunity, and improve cross-border business and commercial ties.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government—elected in May 1979, and re-elected in June 1983 and June 1987—dominates the British political scene. The Conservatives, or Tories, now hold 375 seats—for a commanding 100-vote majority—in the 650-member House of Commons (in addition, the non-voting Speaker of the House is a Conservative member of Parliament). In its first two terms, the Thatcher government's program included efforts to curb the power of the unions, reduce inflation, and privatize nationally owned industries. The third term program includes reform of local government finance by replacing "rates" (essentially real estate taxes) with a universal community charge (dubbed the "poll tax"), educational reform, National Health Service and legal system reforms, and privatization of electricity and water.

The Labor Party holds 228 seats in the House of Commons. Under Neil Kinnock, the official leader of the opposition, the Labor Party has challenged most government initiatives, running in 1983 and 1987 on platforms calling for renationalization of certain industries, unilateral British nuclear disarmament, and greater government spending on social programs and the National Health Service. Following its third consecutive general election defeat, the Labor Party embarked on a major review of its policies, which resulted in a move away from unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The centrist Alliance, composed of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Liberal Party, won 23% of the vote in the 1987 general election. Because of the UK's single-member-constituency, winner-take-all voting system, however, the Alliance won only 22 seats in the House of Commons.

Following the election, Liberal Party leaders and some SDP leaders called for a formal merger of the two parties. Other Social Democrats, under SDP leader David Owen, opted to remain independent. In 1988, the Alliance was dissolved, and the "mergerites" formed a new party, the Social and Liberal Democrats (SLD). It holds 19 seats in Parliament. The separate SDP under Owen has three members of Parliament. Both the SLD and the SDP favor the introduction of proportional representation. Proposals have been floated for an electoral arrangement between the SLD and the SDP whereby only one of the parties would offer a candidate in each constituency. No agreement has yet been reached.

Of the remaining 24 seats in the House of Commons, Northern Ireland

Principal Government Officials

Head of State—*Queen Elizabeth II*
Prime Minister—*Margaret Thatcher*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—*Douglas Hurd*

Ambassador to the US—*Sir Anthony Acland*
Ambassador to the UN—*Sir David Hannay*

The United Kingdom maintains an embassy in the United States at 3100 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202–462–1340). Consulates general are at Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Seattle, and consulates are at Dallas, San Juan, and St. Thomas.

parties fill 17, the Scottish nationalists 4 (including a seat taken from Labor in a by-election), and the Welsh nationalists 3.

The next general election must be held by June 1992.

ECONOMY

The United Kingdom is one of the largest European economies and one of the world's great trading powers. As an international financial center, London is as yet unrivaled.

Although economic growth increased markedly in the 25 years following the end of World War II, the rate of growth was much slower than that of most other European industrial countries. Between 1950 and 1970, the United Kingdom dropped from having the highest per capita income in Europe to being ahead of only Ireland and Italy among the Eureopean Community (EC) countries when the United Kingdom joined in 1973. During the 1970s, the economic growth rate slowed even more, as did those of most industrial countries.

From the depths of the 1979–81 recession, the British economy has made some impressive gains. The current expansion, starting in 1981, is the longest period of continuous economic growth in the last 30 years. Inflation averaged more than 14% per year during 1979–81. In 1986, it was 3%, but 9% in 1989. During the recession, industrial production fell by almost 10% but has since recovered. Real economic growth in 1989 was 2.3%, depending on the measure used.

In some respects, however, the UK economy has not completely recovered from the recession of the early 1980s. The unemployment rate, which stood at just over 5% in 1979, grew to more than 13% in 1986. It is now 6.5%. Although manufacturing output dropped 14% from 1979 to 1981, by 1987 it had fully recovered and continues to grow rapidly.

Strong domestic demand and rapid growth in income has contributed to a trade deficit. Exports of goods and services grew slowly in 1989—by 5% on a volume basis—while imports have grown strongly by more than 8%. As a result, the current account is in deficit by more than $34 billion.

The Conservatives' economic goals are to reduce the role of the government in the economy, moderate the growth of the money supply, and remove structural rigidities in the proper functioning of markets. The government has privatized most large state-owned companies, including British Telecom, British Aerospace, Rover, and British Gas. The electricity and water companies are now being privatized.

The United Kingdom and the United States have important economic ties. Britain is the United States' largest trading partner in the EC. Next to Canada, it is the largest recipient of US foreign direct investment. Britain is the largest source of foreign direct investment in the United States with nearly $100 billion invested there at the end of 1989.

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture in the United Kingdom is intensive, highly mechanized, and efficient by European standards but produces only about 57% of Britain's food requirements because of climatic factors. Only 2.3% of the work force is engaged in farming. Livestock and dairy farming account for the greater part of production.

British industry is a mixture of publicly and privately owned firms. Several important industries are publicly owned—steel, railroads, coal mining, shipbuilding, and certain utilities. Since 1979, the British Government has sold off a number of companies as part of its privatization program.

Government agencies primarily responsible for economic policy are the Treasury and the Departments of Trade and Industry, Energy, and Employment. The Confederation of British Industry is the central body representing British industry, serving as an important communications channel between government and industry.

Energy Sources

The United Kingdom is an energy-rich nation with large coal resources, although much of that is now high cost. It also has significant reserves of oil and gas in the North Sea. Primary energy production accounts for about 6% of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product, among the highest of any industrial nation.

The rapid development of North Sea oil converted the United Kingdom in 10 years (1973–83) from an importer of almost all of its petroleum requirements into a major oil producer—about 2.2 million barrels per day (b/d) in 1989, and a net exporter—just under 1 million b/d.

Although North Sea production may now have reached its peak, the area should be an important source of continued production and new discoveries for many years. In fact, some studies suggest that in the mid-1990s Britain could be producing more than 2 million b/d. US oil and oil-service companies actively participate in the North Sea oil industry and consider the United Kingdom an attractive environment for future investment.

Labor

In September 1988, the United Kingdom had an employed workforce of 22 million, plus 3 million self-employed, out of a total working population of 28 million. The major change in the British labor market in the 1980s has been the growth in female employment, particularly part time. Such employment grew by more than 1 million between 1983 and 1989, and self-employment for women grew by a further 250,000. In contrast, total male employment increased by just 2,000 during the same period. Of the new jobs taken by women, 650,000 involved part-time work, and the majority were created in service industries.

By late 1989, 10.9 million workers were members of a trade union. The Trade Union Congress (TUC), the major trade union federation, accounted for 9.25 million workers organized in 87 independent unions. The remaining 1.29 million workers belonged to 248 small associations.

G-7 Economic Summit 1990

President Bush hosted the 16th annual G-7 summit for the leaders of the major industrialized democracies—Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and the president of the European Community, in Houston, Texas, July 9-11, 1990.

The Houston economic summit was held against the backdrop of movement toward democracy and freer markets in many parts of the world, including elections in Eastern Europe and Nicaragua, increasing momentum toward German unification, and political reforms in the Soviet Union. The summit leaders agreed on most international economic and political issues, but intense discussions were needed on agricultural subsidies in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, economic assistance to the Soviet Union, and global warming before consensus could be reached.

Economic Accomplishments

- Agreement on progressive reductions in internal and external support and protection of agriculture and on a framework for conducting agricultural negotiations in order to conclude the Uruguay Round by December 1990.
- Request to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to undertake a study of the Soviet economy, to make recommendations, and to establish the criteria under which Western economic assistance could effectively support Soviet reforms by the end of 1990.
- Support for aid to Central and East European nations that are firmly committed to political and economic reform, including freer markets, and encouragement of foreign private investment in those countries and improved markets for their exports by means of trade and investment agreements.
- Pledge to begin negotiations, to be completed by 1992, on a global forest convention to protect the world's forests.

Political Accomplishments

- Promotion of democracy throughout the world by assisting in the drafting of laws, advising in fostering independent media, establishing training programs, and expanding exchange programs.
- Endorsement of the maintenance of an effective international nuclear nonproliferation system, including adoption of safeguards and nuclear export control measures, and support for a complete ban on chemical weapons.

The total unionized population has fallen from a 1978 figure of 13.3 million mirroring the decline of traditional industries. Although women make up 46% of the work force, they are predominantly employed in industries with a low level of trade union activity. As a result, only 30% of the members of TUC-affiliated unions are female. However, four UK unions are led by women, including the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades which has 200,000 members. Two unions that have reversed the general trend of membership decline—the banking, insurance, and finance union and the union of shop, distributive, and allied trades—are recruiting among a predominantly female work force.

More than 50% of TUC-affiliated union members contribute to political funds that are channeled mainly into the Labor Party. Unions affiliated to the Labor Party may sponsor members of Parliament, take part in the selection of candidates, and wield "bloc" votes at the party conference. In 1985, legislation forced the unions to poll their members on the funds' use. Ballots taken since then have shown an overwhelming majority in favor of the retention of political funds.

Unemployment in the United Kingdom rose steadily between 1975 and 1986. In January 1987, it peaked at 3.3 million (12%) before seasonal adjustment but gradually declined to 7.7 million (6.5%) by December 1989. More than 40% of those had been unemployed for more than a year. Unemployment levels vary regionally: Northern Ireland, with a current unemployment rate of 17%, has a longstanding history of high unemployment, while the more prosperous southeast region, around London, had a 1989 rate of only 4%. Scotland (8.2%), northwest England (10.8%), northern England (11%), Wales (10.5%), and the Yorkshire area (9.5%) have unemployment rates above the national average and are areas where traditional industrial activities (e.g., coal mining, steel manufacturing, and shipbuilding) have declined.

British industrial relations in the 1970s and 1980s have reflected the character of the trade unions' relationship with the government. A prominent objective of the Conservative Party was to reform industrial relations and make trade unions more accountable to their members. Since 1979, labor legislation has been introduced to limit the immunity from a court proceeding that a trade union traditionally has enjoyed unless it conducts a secret ballot before going on strike. The legislation also provides greater protection for individual workers in disputes with their unions, requires elections for union executives, and forces unions to poll their members on the retention of political levies. The trade unions disagree with much of the legislation and wish to have it amended.

During 1984–85, Britain lost a substantial number of working days through strikes. The longest running dispute occurred in the mining industry when the National Union of Mineworkers held a strike for more than 1 year to oppose scheduled mine closures. Eventually, the strike was defeated when miners returned to work without a settlement and tacitly accepted the job losses. The bitterness generated by the lengthy dispute will continue to influence labor affairs for years to come. During the past several years, there has been a considerable drop in the number of days lost through strikes, which has been attributed in part to the high unemployment extending through 1988. Concern for job security made many workers cautious about risking their jobs—caution reinforced by the 1986 dismissal of 5,000 striking printworkers. Legislation that placed restrictions on strike activity and imposed severe penalties upon unions disregarding these restrictions, also helped reduce the incidence of strikes.

Foreign Assistance

UK aid to developing countries includes loans and grants, technical assistance, budgetary support, and contributions to international agencies that provide financial aid and technical assistance.

Although the British aid program is global, Commonwealth countries receive special attention. The major recipients in recent years have been Africa and South Asia, particularly India, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Pakistan, Sudan, and Kenya. A growing share is channeled through multilateral institutions.

Total net official development assistance in 1989 was $2 billion, or 0.24% of GDP. The British aid program is administered by the Overseas Development Administration, an agency of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

DEFENSE

The prime minister and the cabinet, under the ultimate control of Parliament, have supreme responsibility for defense matters. The secretary of state for defense and two deputies, the ministers of state for defense, report to the prime minister. The chief of the defense staff is the senior military officer.

The United Kingdom is a key member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The United Kingdom is second only to the United States in NATO in total defense expenditure.

Britain is one of NATO's major European maritime powers. The 57,000-member Royal Navy is in charge of its independent strategic nuclear arm—Polaris missile submarines to be replaced by Trident II. Defense of US reinforcement and resupply of Europe is one of the Royal Navy's major tasks. In addition, the 7,700-member Royal Marines provide commando units for amphibious assault and for specialist reinforcement forces in and beyond the NATO area.

The army, with a strength of 156,000, including 5,700 women, provides for the ground defense of the United Kingdom through its participation in NATO. The British Army of the Rhine, a major element of NATO's forward defense strategy, has 52,000 soldiers stationed in Germany.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) has about 90,000 men and women in uniform and receives the largest share of modern equipment.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The United Kingdom is a leading member of NATO and of the United Nations where it is a permanent member of the Security Council. It has historic global ties, but, as its commitments have been reduced since World War II, the United Kingdom has sought a closer association with Europe. It entered the EC on January 1, 1973, and has played a leading role in reactivating the Western European Union. Britain is represented by 81 directly elected members of the European Parliament (45 Conservative, 32 Labor, and 4 Northern Ireland and Scotland seats).

Under Prime Minister Thatcher's leadership, the United Kingdom has been a strong advocate within NATO of a continuing reliance on a strong defense and a realistic assessment of the security situation as the indispensable bases for a successful dialogue with the East. The United Kingdom took a leading role in helping implement NATO's 1979 dual-track decision, which led to the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The United Kingdom frequently has sought to facilitate peaceful resolution of conflicts in various areas of the world.

Principal US Officials

Ambassador—*Henry E. Catto*
Minister (Deputy Chief of Mission)—*Ronald E. Woods*
Minister for Economic Affairs—*Ann R. Berry*
Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs—*Bruce G. Burton*
Minister-Counselor for Consular Affairs—*Norbert J. Krieg*
Minister-Counselor for Administrative Affairs—*John Condayan*
Minister-Counselor for Commercial Affairs—*James L. Blow*
Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs (USIS)—*Charles Courtney*
Counselor for Labor Affairs—*Lester P. Slezak*
Counselor for Scientific Affairs—*James B. Devine*

The US Embassy in the United Kingdom is at 24/31 Grosvenor Square, London, W1A 1AE (tel. 499–9000). Consulates General are at Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Edinburgh, Scotland.

US-UK RELATIONS

The United Kingdom is one of the United States' closest allies, enjoying a so-called special relationship, and British foreign policy emphasizes close coordination with the United States. Bilateral cooperation reflects the common language, ideals, and democratic practices of the two nations. The relations were strengthened by the UK's alliance with the United States during both World Wars, the Korean conflict, and now during the conflict in the gulf.

The United Kingdom and the United States continually consult on foreign policy issues and global problems and share major foreign and security policy objectives. ■

Travel Notes

Clothing: Fall and winter clothing is needed from about September through April; spring and summer clothing is useful the rest of the year.

Health: Good medical facilities are available. Living conditions are generally excellent, with no unusual health hazards.

Telecommunications: London and nearly all UK localities have an automatic dial-through telephone system. Cities in the United States and Western Europe also may be reached by direct dialing. Internal and international services are efficient. London is five time zones ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Transportation: The United Kingdom is a crossroads for international aviation. Rail, air, and bus transportation in the United Kingdom is excellent, and travel between all points is quick and easy. Rental cars are available. Traffic moves on the left.

Holidays:

England

Good Friday	Apr. 13
Easter Monday	Apr. 16
May Day	1st Mon. in May
Spring Holiday	4th Mon. in May
Summer Bank Holiday	4th Mon. in Aug.
Christmas Day	Dec. 25
Boxing Day	Dec. 26

Northern Ireland

St. Patrick's Day	Mar. 17
Good Friday	Apr. 13
Easter Monday	Apr. 16
Easter Tuesday	Apr. 17
May Day	1st Mon. in May
Orangemen's Day	2nd Fri. in July
Summer Bank Holiday	4th Mon. in Aug.
Christmas Day	Dec. 25
Boxing Day	Dec. 26

Scotland

Bank Holiday	Jan. 2
Good Friday	Apr. 13
Easter Monday	Apr. 16
Victoria Day	3rd Mon. in May
Bank Holiday	1st Mon. in Aug.
Autumn Holiday	3rd Mon. in Sept.
Christmas Day	Dec. 25
Boxing Day	Dec. 26

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